

At twelve o'clock of Christmas eve James Collins closed his roller-top desk with a slam, and turned to the typists, clerks, stenographers and book-keepers.

"Boys and girls," he announced, "this is Christmas morning. We're a little behind with our work, as it is, but we're no heathens. I declare a holiday from this till eight o'clock of the morning of the twenty-sixth."

In two minutes the place was empty of employees. The two brothers donned their overcoats in silence.

"Let's do a little missionary work," said Brother James, pausing a moment at the door. "Let's go find that prodigal brother of ours and tell him the fatted gobbler will be ready at a reserved table at the Palm tomorrow evening at seven."

The enigmatic smile flitted once more across Arthur's face. "Where shall we look for him?" he carelessly inquired.

"I haven't the least idea," returned James with the same ostentatious carelessness, "but we might try Jake's."

"What!" ejaculated Arthur, in affected horror. "Our godly brother, Robert, at Jake's?"

"All things are possible," sententiously declared James, glancing down from heights of superior experience upon the younger brother. But he felt a queer sensation as that enigmatic smile flashed once more over Arthur's countenance, and placed his hand uneasily on his chest.

"What's the matter?" cried Arthur.

"A little heartburn," answered James.

"From drinking wine?" solicitously pursued the junior.

James did not reply. He was doing some thinking.

The visit to Jake's was fruitless: Robert was not there.

"Neither is Madelene," murmured James.

"What's that?" snapped Arthur.

"Nothing, nothing," hastily replied James. The elder brother was evidently much dissatisfied with something or other, and went to bed muttering words, some of which sounded like "old fools."

But his emotion at that hour was nothing to be compared to that of next morning, when, at breakfast at the Palm, his face froze and his eyes popped as he re-read an item that had caught his eye on the first page.

"What's the matter?" inquired Arthur, who was sitting opposite. For reply James folded the paper about the item of interest and handed it to his brother.

"Read that—read it," he croaked. And Arthur read it aloud.

BROKER WEDS ACTRESS.

Robert C. Collins, the popular head of the firm of Collins Brothers, Brokers, was married in this city yesterday to Miss Ann Madelene Delavigne, a dramatic star of magnitude, who has performed in nearly every mining camp of the Far West.

The happy couple left last evening for Los Angeles, where they will spend their honeymoon.

Two brothers of the youthful bridegroom remain in Goldfield and will break the news by wire to his parents in Denver.

"Angels and ministers of grace—" ejaculated Arthur. "Walter, bring us a bottle of wine. James, you need a drink."

James shook his head sadly. "And to think of it, Arthur," he said, almost tearfully, "I knew that woman in Cripple Creek, in 1893."

Arthur affected to misunderstand him. "You stood no chance at all, a youngster like you,"

he said brightly. "Robert had twelve years the start of you: he knew her in Leadville in 1882."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Brother James. "Old enough to be his mother!"

"Good morning, major," cried Arthur heartily to a stout, elderly, somewhat bleary-eyed individual who was approaching their table. "Brother James, this is Major Stanley, who was one of Mackay's staff on the Comstock in bonanza days. Have a glass of wine, Major?"

"It's rather early in the day for wine, but it's Christmas. I was out with the other young blades last night; and a hair of the dog that bit me—you know the rest. Ah! I perceive—celebrating your brother Robert's—ahem!—good fortune, eh?"

"And our own, Major; our own," vociferated Arthur. For James was still speechless.

For an instant, the Major looked surprised. Then he brightened. "Ah, there's nothing like it—brotherly love, brotherly love! To see you rejoicing thus over your brother's nuptials touches this veteran's hard old heart, at least. Your health, gentlemen, your health, and your brother's health. And the health of the bride—a fine woman, sir!"

"Knew her?" returned the rubicund old tippler, as he replaced his glass on the table and brushed a drop of wine from his dyed moustache. "Knew her? Well, I should say I did know her. I heard her sing 'Champagne Charley' at the old Alhambra in Virginia City in 1874. God bless me! What's the matter?" he cried, turning in alarm to Brother James, from whose throat was coming queer, inarticulate sounds.

"Pound him on the back, Major, pound him on the back," cried Arthur. "A piece of steak has stuck in his throat."

By the way, Stickney's carry the largest assortment of high-class cigars for discriminating smoke consumers.

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